

Session 1

NONE OF US ARE STRANGERS

Ice-Breakers

- * How did you first discover MCC?
- * Briefly describe a happy moment in your life that you shared with other people.

Introduction

The writer of this letter addresses early Christians reminding them that together they form a community in which each person is welcome and has a place. As you read this passage, think about what it means to be a part of a community where you fit together with the other members.

Looking into the Story

- 1) Why do you suppose that the people to whom this letter was sent weren't strangers any longer?
 - a) They knew each other by name.
 - b) Together they formed something greater than themselves.
 - c) They shared their lives with each other.
 - d) They spent lots of time together.
 - e) other (please specify)
- 2) What do you think the writer meant by forming a temple which rises on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ as the capstone?
 - a) It's important to build beautiful churches.
 - b) Churches should always do things the way they were done in the past.
 - c) Since they formed a temple themselves, they didn't need to go to the temple to pray.
 - d) They were a living part of what the apostles and prophets did before them.
 - e) other (please specify)
- 3) How do you believe that the members of the community were fitted together in Christ?
 - a) They had been baptized.
 - b) They all had met Jesus at one time or another.
 - c) They affirmed each other's gifts.
 - d) They looked for the good in each member.
 - e) other (please specify)
- 4) If you were one of the original members of the community that received this letter, how do you think you would have felt to be told that you were being built into a dwelling place for God?
 - a) Amazed.
 - b) The writer is crazy - what are they talking about?
 - c) I'm in the wrong group!
 - d) Glad I'm here!

Ephesians 2:19-22

You are no longer strangers and outsiders. You now are fellow citizens with the saints and belong to God's household. You form a building secure on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Through Christ the whole structure is joined together and takes shape as a temple consecrated to God's presence. In Christ, you are becoming the dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

My Own Story

- 1) How do you see yourself as a stranger or alien when it comes to belonging to a community of faith?
 - a) I never felt faith was important.
 - b) I'm not a joiner in any kind of group.
 - c) I always felt "the church" said that to be myself was wrong.
 - d) I've been content to be who I am so I never needed to be in a community.
 - e) This is part of my life I want to explore.
 - f) A community of faith is something important to me.
 - g) other (please specify)
- 2) How does it feel to you to know that "in Christ, you are becoming the dwelling place of God through the Spirit"?
- 3) In what ways can you see God being present in this group or in this church?
- 4) How do you feel about being part of a group which helps you find God in your life?
- 5) How can this group help you in feeling like you belong?
 - a) Accepting me for who I am.
 - b) Listening to my story.
 - c) Challenging me to grow.
 - d) Helping me to understand others in the group.
 - e) Being patient while I get used to this.
 - f) other (please specify)

Caring Time

Part One

Every group needs to be in agreement as to its purpose and goals. The Bible is full of covenants between God and humanity and between peoples. Together we will make a covenant.

The purpose of this group is....

The goals of this group are...

We will meet for 10 weeks, studying "Celebrating Our Lives Together: Building a Community of Faith".

We will meet from 7pm to 8:30pm. We will arrive in enough time so we can all be settled and begin on time. We will respect each other's time and end on time. If I want to talk longer about something, I can stay after the group and talk with anyone who is willing.

We will always keep an empty chair in our circle to remind us to invite others to this group.

We will listen to each other's thoughts and feelings with respect. We can share our experience and feelings outside of the group but we will treat other people's thoughts, comments and stories as confidential.

Part Two

Now, we will take some time to pray together. If you are not used to praying in a group, you can give it a try by completing this sentence: "God, today I want to thank you for..."

If you would rather pray in silence, say the word "Amen" so that the group will know that you've finished your prayer.

SESSION 2

A Community of Faith; the Things We Do Together

Ice-breakers

- * How many people were there living in your house when you were growing up?
- * Has anyone here ever lived in a community? What was that like?
- * Share an experience when you knew you were really a part of and belonged to a team or group.

Introduction

This passage describes the community life of the early believers. The members were bound together by the things they did together such as breaking of the bread, prayer, and sharing their things with each other. As you read this passage, think about what it would be like to belong to such a community?

Looking into the Story

- 1) If you were invited to a meeting of the community described in this passage, what would your first impression be?
 - a) They are religious fanatics.
 - b) I like how they treat each other.
 - c) They have something here that I want to be a part of.
 - d) Wow! The miracles are amazing. It's a good show.
 - e) other (please specify)
- 2) What do you suppose it would have been like to hear the apostles' teaching, see the wonders, and watch the community grow?
- 3) If you were one of the members of this community, how would it have felt to you to sell your property and goods to share with the other members on the basis of each one's need.?
- 4) What do you think motivated people to be this committed to each other?
 - a) A desire to have a place to belong.
 - b) They were mis-fits in the rest of society.
 - c) A spiritual experience.
 - d) A commitment to the ideals of the community.
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 5) How do you think it would feel to be this committed and devoted?

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves constantly to the teaching of the apostles, the life of the community, the breaking of bread, and prayer. A sense of awe overwhelmed them because the apostles performed many wonders and signs. All who believed shared their things in common, selling their possessions and dividing everything according to each one's needs. Daily they went to the temple. At home they broke bread. They shared their meals with glad and generous hearts. Constantly praising God, with good will from others, God added to their number those being saved.

My Own Story

- 1) What aspects of this community are most impressive to you. Rate the following with #1 being the most impressive. Share your answers in diads or triads.
 - * learning from the apostles
 - * breaking of the bread
 - * prayer
 - * signs and wonders
 - * sharing things in common
 - * selling possessions
 - * sharing with each according to the need
 - * common meals
 - * approval of the people
 - * growing in numbers
- 2) What would most attract you to belong to such a community?
 - a) Doing everything together
 - b) Not having financial concerns
 - c) The support of having a place to belong
 - d) The spiritual practices like prayer, communion and study
- 3) Which of the following types of needs would such a community meet in your life?
 - a) Social - doing things with others
 - b) Spiritual - prayer, communion, study
 - c) Financial - sharing goods according to needs
 - d) Psychological - a sense of belonging
- 4) Which of these needs is most important to you today?

Caring Time

This week we will take time to share prayer requests which can be noted in the column of your notebooks. This will help remind us to pray for each other during the week. Each person is asked to answer this question: *"How can this group support you in prayer this week?"*

After everyone has shared, we will now take time to pray together for these and other concerns. If you are uncomfortable praying aloud, you may try by completing this sentence: *"God, today I want to pray for..."*

Anyone who wishes to pray silently, may, as last week, simply say *"Amen"* when finished.

Let's remember to pray for the empty chair - for the person God wants us to invite to this group.

SESSION 3

Who is Jesus? What Difference Does He Make?

Ice-Breakers

* When you were growing up, who was an influential person in your life? How were they influential?

* Describe what you can recall of your image of God when you were 10 years old. Describe your image of God today. Note any differences.

* Share about a significant turning point in your life.

Introduction

In this reading, Jesus asks the apostles about his identity. The apostles, who traveled with Jesus, grew over time in their understanding and perceptions of themselves as individuals, each other, and Jesus. As you read this passage, think about what it must have been like to get to know Jesus while walking country roads. Think about what experiences Peter had with Jesus to prompt him to answer as he did.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What do you think you would have thought if you were one of the apostles when Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?"
 - a) You are the carpenter's son.
 - b) You're a great teacher.
 - c) You are a prophet and healer.
 - d) You allow God to work through you.
 - e) Why are you asking this?
 - f) Other (please specify)
- 2) What experiences, do you believe, most helped Peter give the answer he gave?
 - a) Seeing the miracles
 - b) Hearing Jesus talk about God
 - c) His attempt at walking on water
 - d) Watching other people's reaction to Jesus
- 3) What do you think this experience taught Peter about himself?
- 4) What do you think Peter thought when Jesus told him that the One in heaven had revealed the right answer to him?
- 5) What do you think Peter thought and felt when Jesus said, "You are the Rock and on this rock I will build my church"?

Matthew 16:15-18

Jesus asked the apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus responded, "You are blest, Simon, son of Jonah. No mortal has shown you this but the One who is in heaven. I tell you, you are 'Rock' and on this rock I will build my church."

My Own Story

- 1) Today, who is Jesus for you?
- 2) What does it mean to you to have faith to be the foundation of the church?
 - a) To believe without doubt

- b) To allow God to use me
- c) To be rooted and solid in my faith
- d) To be a spiritual leader
- e) Other (please specify)

- 3) How can this group help you grow in your understanding of Jesus?
- a) By hearing about who Jesus is for other people
 - b) By allowing me to ask questions and explore my faith
 - c) By helping me discover what the Bible says about Jesus
 - d) By helping me discover Jesus in my own life

Caring Time

1) Does anyone have anything to give thanks for this week? If any of the thanks are for prayer requests from last week, be sure to note the answered prayers in your notebook.

2) Does anyone have any prayer requests they would like the group to pray for? Please note prayer requests in your notebooks.

3) Tonight we will share together in silent prayer. Let's form a circle holding hands and take time looking at each other while praying silently for each other. Don't forget to include the empty chair in your prayers.

SESSION 4

God Chose Me?

Ice-Breakers

* Make three statements about yourself to the group. However, only two of those statements should be true and one should be untrue. Make sure the untrue statement is not too obvious. The rest of the group will try to guess which statements are true and which one is untrue.

* Share one thing about yourself that you feel pride in.

Introduction

This reading was originally part of a sermon delivered to a group of newly baptized Christians. Imagine the excitement they must have experienced in becoming part of a new community of faith. Think about what it must have meant to be told that now they have a new dignity reflecting God's glory.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What do you think that the preacher meant by saying that this group was "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"?
 - a) They are special because God loves them.
 - b) They were all destined to be priests.
 - c) Other (please specify)
- 2) What do you think it meant to those who first heard this sermon to hear that God called them from shadows into marvelous brilliance?
 - a) They would never have problems in life again.
 - b) God would always be with them.
 - c) That God was going to change their lives.
 - d) That light is better than darkness.
 - e) Other (please specify).
- 3) Imagine that you were one of the people to whom these words were addressed. What impact do you think they would have had for you?
 - a) I would have been confused.
 - b) I would have been frightened that I was supposed to become a priest or preacher or something.
 - c) I would have thought this community was something special to belong to.
 - d) It would have made me feel special.
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 4) In smaller groups, rewrite this passage in your own words.

1 Peter 2:9-10

You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, a special people claimed as God's own to proclaim the wonderful works" of the One who called you from shadows into marvelous brilliance. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once no one showed mercy to you, but now you have found compassion.

My Own Story

- 1) What does it mean for you to be part of a people claimed as God's own?
 - a) To have a place to belong
 - b) To be a member of the church
 - c) I have self-worth
 - d) Other (please specify)
- 2) Do you feel like you are part of "a chosen people, a royal priesthood"? If yes, how? If no, why?
- 3) How has this group or this church helped you in moving from "shadows into God's marvelous brilliance"?
 - a) By listening to my story
 - b) By letting me be who I am
 - c) By challenging my faith
 - d) By providing a regular place to meet other people
- 4) In what ways have you found "mercy" or "compassion" in your life?

Caring Time

Today we will pray in pairs or trios. Share together your prayer requests. Share together your desire for God in your life. Share together your prayers. You are encouraged to pray aloud with each other. Anyone who truly feels uncomfortable praying aloud may pray silently saying "Amen" when they are finished.

When your pair or trio is finished, please be respectful of others who are still praying. As others finish, greet each other with the "peace of Christ". Celebrate our community in Christ.

SESSION 5

Our Group Helps Change The World

Ice-Breakers

- * If you could visit another country for one month, where would you go and why?
- * What would you take with you that people in that country would find interesting or different?

Introduction

Jesus, speaking to the crowd gathered on the hillside, presents images of how the community of faith brings change in the world around it. As you read this passage, think about what it means to season the lives of those around you like salt and to be a light for other's path.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What do you suppose was the tone of Jesus' voice when he told the crowd that they were the salt of the earth and the light of the world?
 - a) challenging
 - b) directive
 - c) accusatory
 - d) compassionate
 - e) gentle
- 2) How do you think these words made people feel about themselves?
 - a) confused
 - b) hopeful
 - c) anxious
 - d) guilty
 - e) proud
- 3) If you were part of the crowd hearing this sermon for the first time, what would you tell the people you live with about what you heard?
 - a) I can make a difference.
 - b) You wouldn't believe what the preacher said today!
 - c) You're lucky to have me around.
 - d) I'm confused
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 4) If Jesus was trying to make this point today, what images do you think he would use in the place of salt and light?

My Own Story

- 1) Where is your "light", your faith, in relationship to being under a bushel or on a lamp stand?
under _____ on lamp
bushel _____ stand

Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, how can you restore its flavor? It's good for nothing and should be thrown out and trampled under foot.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill can't be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket. A lamp is put on a stand so that it can light the house. In just that way, your light needs to shine so that everyone can see the good things you do and give praise to God in heaven.

- 2) What does it feel like to you to think about your light being on a lamp stand so that people can see your good works?
- It makes me nervous.
 - This sounds hokey to me.
 - It feels like I'm bragging.
 - Other (please specify)
- 3) How are you the salt for this community? (In other words, if salt is a preservative and gives flavor, how do you help preserve or give flavor to this community?)
- 4) What do you think it takes to be salt for the earth or light of the world?
- courage
 - strength
 - stupidity
 - faith
 - only Jesus can do that
 - other (please specify)

Caring Time

Share together your thanksgivings and answered prayers.
Share together your prayer requests.

In pairs, share together in five-finger prayer.

Your index finger is used for pointing and is used in teaching.

Pray for teachers

Your third finger is your tallest finger.

Pray for people in positions of authority: elected officials, pastor.

Your fourth finger is your weakest.

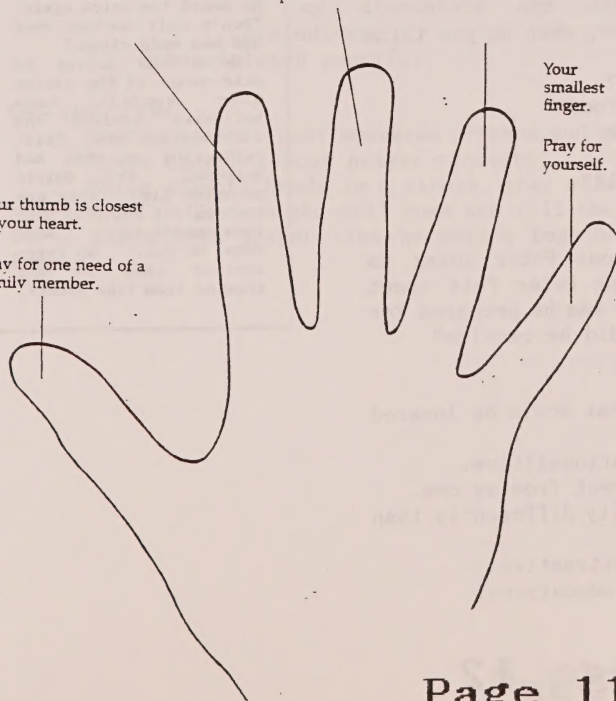
Pray for the weak:

Your smallest finger.

Pray for yourself.

Your thumb is closest to your heart.

Pray for one need of a family member.



SESSION 6

Making Room For Those Who Are Different

Ice-Breakers

- * What do you like to do when you are alone?
- * What do you like to do when a friend comes to visit?
- * What size group of people are you most comfortable in?

Introduction

The community of faith, holds a place for all people. It is a community characterized by hospitality where each individual is welcomed.

Looking Into The Story

- 1) How do you think Peter felt about having this vision?
 - a) Confused
 - b) Convinced never to pray on the roof again.
 - c) Sure that he shouldn't let himself get that hungry.
 - d) Amazed at how God works.
 - e) Uncomfortable about having to be with the Gentiles.
- 2) Knowing that Jews were not allowed to welcome Gentiles into their homes, what kind of welcome do you think the visitors expected?
- 3) What preconceived biases do you suspect each group had about the other?
- 4) How do you think the Gentiles felt about the welcome they received?
- 5) Later, while they were having dinner, what do you think Peter asked them about themselves?
 - a) What's it like being a Gentile?
 - b) Why do you people eat unclean food?
 - c) How can I get to know you better?
 - d) Wouldn't you rather be a Jew?
 - e) What can I tell you about myself?
 - f) What can I do for you?
- 6) Later in the chapter, we read about Peter going to Cornelius' house. How do you think Peter felt about going to the home of a Gentile? How was he prepared for this visit? What sort of welcome did he receive?

Acts 10:9-14, 15, 17, 19-20, 23

One day at noon, Peter went to the roof to pray. He was hungry and wanted something to eat. While the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open and what looked like a sheet was lowered by its four corners. It contained all earth's four-legged animals, reptiles, and birds. Peter heard a voice, "Get up, kill and eat." "No", Peter said, "I would never do such a thing. I've never eaten anything unclean in my life." And he heard the voice again, "Don't call unclean what God has made clean."

Peter was trying to make sense of the vision when Gentile non-believers arrived and asked to see him. Still reflecting on what had happened, the Spirit prompted him. "They are looking for you. Go with them immediately. I sent them to you." So Peter invited them in and treated them like guests.

My Own Story

- 1) If you had a vision like Peter's, what would be lowered to you on your canvas?
 - a) People of different races or nationalities.
 - b) People whose beliefs are different from my own.
 - c) People who express their sexuality differently than I do.
 - d) People who I don't find to be attractive.
 - e) People of a different class or educational

background.

- f) People with physical abilities different than mine.
 - g) Other (please specify)
- 2) Can you acknowledge resistance in yourself like Peter originally had? What is the source of that resistance?
- 3) How can you learn to be hospitably open to the kinds of things on your canvas?
- a) Being aware of my own limitations
 - b) Recognizing that not everyone is comfortable with who I am either.
 - c) Admitting my feelings of discomfort and learning to heal my biases.
 - d) Making it a practice to welcome everyone.
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 4) How can this group become more welcoming of others?
- a) I think we are pretty open and welcoming.
 - b) Praying more for the person who will fill the empty chair.
 - c) When picking pairs, pick people I don't know.
 - d) Actively invite people I don't know to come to this group.
- 5) How can you help our church become more welcoming of others?
- a) I think we are pretty open and welcoming.
 - b) Praying more for new people to come to church.
 - c) Speaking to people I don't know at church.
 - d) Inviting new people to do things outside of church.
 - e) Attend workshops to help me look at the sources of my discomfort and heal from my prejudices.
 - f) Other (please specify)

Caring Time

Share together your answered prayers and thanksgivings.
Share together your prayer requests.

While holding hands in a circle, pray silently for each other and for the one who will come and fill the empty chair.
Close the silent prayer time by saying together The Lord's Prayer.

SESSION 7

Community Means Caring For Others

Ice-Breakers

- * Share an experience when you really felt loved.
- * If a friend of yours wanted to do something to make you feel special, what could that friend do?

Introduction

Jesus gave himself to others in many ways. While sharing their last meal together, Jesus taught the disciples to affirm and support others through his actions. In washing the feet of the disciples, he demonstrated how important it is to reach out to others where they are. As you read this passage, think about how Jesus was very practical in the ways in which he affirmed and supported others.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What point do you think Jesus was trying to make by washing the feet of the disciples?
- 2) How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus washing their feet?
 - a) amazed and stunned
 - b) confused
 - c) angry and annoyed
 - d) glad to get their feet washed
 - e) uncomfortable with the intimacy
 - f) honored
 - g) other (please specify)
- 3) What thoughts do you think went through the disciples' minds as Jesus worked his way through the group washing their feet?
- 4) What difference do you think was made in the lives of the disciples because Jesus washed their feet?

John 13:3-5

Jesus - knowing that he had come from God and was going to God, who had placed everything in his hands - got up from the supper and took off his cloak. He picked up a towel and tied it around his waist. Pouring water into a basin, he began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel he tied around him.

My Own Story

- 1) If you were at dinner that night, what would you have thought about Jesus washing everyone's feet?
- 2) How would you have felt as Jesus washed your feet?
- 3) Have you ever had your feet washed by another? How did it feel?
- 4) What lessons can we learn from this story?
- 5) How can you live out Jesus' example today?
 - a) Washing people's feet at worship.
 - b) Remember that other people have needs to be met
 - c) Use my abilities to care for or to serve others
 - d) Be sensitive to the people around me

- 6) How do you express care for those you love?
- 7) How can you express care for others at Harvest?

Caring Time

In a moment of caring for each other, form a circle and give each other a short neck and back rub.

On separate pieces of paper, write one thing you appreciate about each member of the group. Fold the piece of paper, putting the member's name on the outside of the paper. When everyone is finished writing, go around and put the "gift" on that member's chair. Take these gifts home with you and feel the support, affirmation and love of the group. Remember it during the week.

Ask for a volunteer to close the group with prayer.

SESSION 8

Meeting Others In Their Need

Ice-Breakers

- * What is your favorite activity on a rainy day?
- * What hobbies do you have?
- * What energizes and/or renews you?

Introduction

There are many needs which face us as people of faith today. The world cries out for hope and compassion. Yet, we are well aware that our gifts and resources are limited.

In today's reading, we read about Jesus facing the people's very real need for food when none was available. In the face of this challenge, Jesus steps out in faith, affirms the gifts of loaves and fishes, and uses them creatively to meet the need. As you read the following story, think about how you can affirm your gifts to be used more creatively to meet the needs of others.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What do you think was the first thing that entered Jesus's mind when the disciples said they had no food?
 - a) Can't they do anything right? I'm tired of taking care of their problems!
 - b) Here's a good opportunity to help them understand what I've been saying all day.
 - c) This miracle is going to be real flashy.
 - d) The crowd is hungry. I need to help them.
 - e) I wonder who will be willing to share their resources so that I can work a miracle through them.
- 2) How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them to feed the crowd themselves?
 - a) Frustrated
 - b) Is this a test or what?
 - c) Hoped Jesus would help them out.
 - d) They wanted Jesus to deal with reality and send the people away.
- 3) As the disciples arranged the crowd into groups of 50, what do you think the crowd was thinking?
 - a) Not another small group discussion.
 - b) This doesn't make sense. We won't be able to see and hear as well.
 - c) What's about to happen?
 - d) Who do these disciples think they are ordering us around?
 - e) Where's the food?
 - f) I don't want to be in this group!
 - g) Other (please specify)

Luke 9:12-17

As the sun began to set, the twelve came to Jesus and said, "Dismiss the crowd so that they can get back to their villages and farms and find something to eat and a place to sleep. This is an out of the way place." He answered, "Why don't you give them something to eat?" They replied, "All we have is five loaves of bread and two fish. Do you want us to go and buy food for all these people?" (There were about 5000 people.) Jesus said to the disciples, "Have them sit in groups of about 50." When they were seated, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, blessed them, broke them, and gave them to his disciples. Everyone ate until they had enough. The leftovers filled twelve baskets.

- 4) As they gathered the left-overs and saw that they filled twelve baskets, how do you think the disciples responded?
- a) This is amazing.
 - b) Good there's a whole basket for each of us!
 - c) Now what?
 - d) Other (please specify)

Your Own Story

- 1) If you had been a member of the crowd, what would you have told your best friend the next day about what had happened?
- a) I found a great place to eat - cheap!
 - b) I heard an amazing rabbi who's not like the one at our synagogue.
 - c) I think I found the Messiah.
 - d) You are going to think I'm crazy but the strangest thing happened yesterday.
- 2) What would you have thought, felt, and done when the disciples came around asking if you had any food to share?
- a) Given it to the disciples immediately.
 - b) Thought, who are they kidding, my lunch is barely enough for me!
 - c) Hidden my food and munched secretly.
 - d) Made a pact with those closest to me to share our food with each other but no further.
 - e) Thought, this is hopeless, we all might as well go home.
 - f) Other (please specify)
- 3) If you were becoming a member of the early church and heard this story told, what would you have thought?
- 4) What lesson do you think the disciples learned?
- 5) What lesson is there for us today?

Caring Time

Share with each other; any experiences you have had of giving your little to God and watching it be multiplied.
Share any experiences of God taking care of your needs.
Share together your prayer requests.

SESSION 9

Community: Not Just Sharing Things But Sharing Who We Are

Ice-Breakers

* Do you know what your name means? If so, share that with others.

* In pairs or trios, which of the following describes you more:

- a model ford, a station wagon or a sports car
- classical music, jazz or rock
- a water color, surrealist, or contemporary painting
- a tight-rope walker, lion tamer, ringmaster

Introduction

Within a Christian community of faith, we are called to share who we are with others. The example of Jesus is that we share our lives with others. In doing so, our lives become enriched. This is one of the meanings of communion. Jesus gave himself in the form of a simple meal that all of us would become part of his body. As members of one body, we are to give ourselves generously as Jesus did.

Looking into the Story

- 1) What do you think Paul was trying to tell the early believers about communion?
 - a) To share communion more reverently.
 - b) That it is a symbol of who we are.
 - c) When we share the bread and the cup, Christ comes alive in us.
 - d) We should share every thing with each other just like we share this meal.
- 2) What kind of experience in Paul's life do you think led him to make this statement?
 - a) The support he received from the community of faith.
 - b) The story of the Last Supper was very touching for him.
 - c) The unity he experienced with others as they shared the meal.
 - d) Other (please specify)
- 3) What do you think Paul meant by saying that although we are many, we are one body in Christ?
- 4) What kind of impact do you think this statement had on the early community of believers?

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

The cup upon which we ask God's blessing, doesn't it mean that we share in the blood of Christ? And the loaf of bread we break, doesn't it mean that we share in the body of Christ? No matter how many of us there are, we are one body because we share one loaf.

My Own Story

- 1) What significance does communion hold for you? Is communion more or less significant to you now than when you were growing up or than your previous church experience? How?

- 2) To what degree has your experience of this small group been like being one body in Christ?
a little ----- a lot
- 3) What kinds of things would help you feel more a part of a community that was like the body of Christ Paul spoke about?
- a) Sharing communion as a group.
 - b) Spending more time together sharing.
 - c) Doing things for people outside the group.
 - d) Sharing in worship with others.
 - e) Other (please specify)
- 4) How do you offer yourself as a gift, blessed and opened/shared, to the community?

Caring Time

Answer this question, "How can the group support you in prayer this week?"

Share together in "popcorn praise". This is short phrases or words offered in thanksgiving. It may begin slowly then start "popping". More than one person can speak/"pop" at the same time!

Remember that you are gifts to each other. Pray for each other during this week. Embrace each other with the peace of Christ, each time you see each other.

Next Week...

In preparation for our final session together in this study, you are asked to bring a symbol of the group, or something that is a symbol of signifies community for you. We will share these symbols and their meaning to us next week. Your symbol will be returned to you unless you choose to bring a symbol that can be permanently given to the group or to each member.

SESSION 10

Living As A Community of Faith

Ice-Breakers

* What is the hardest part of meeting new people for you?

* What is the most important aspect for you of being a part of this community?

Introduction

Jesus fed the disciples and then instructed them to feed others. As we experience community, we are then directed to go and share this experience with others. As you read the story of Jesus feeding the disciples on the beach, reflect on how God feeds you and how God invites you to feed others.

Looking into the Story

- 1) If you had been Peter when Jesus asked the disciples to put down their nets on the other side of the boat, what would you have thought?
 - a) Who's the fisherman here?
 - b) Argued with Jesus about how I know the waters better than he does
 - c) Wondered what inside information he had
 - d) Ignored him
 - e) Immediately moved my nets
 - f) Other (please specify)
- 2) When they caught so many fish, what do you think the disciples thought and felt?
- 3) How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus invited them to breakfast?
- 4) If you had been Peter and Jesus asked you the same question three times, what would your response have been?

My Own Story

- 1) If Jesus was asking you to "put your net on the other side", what might it mean for you?
- 2) Jesus invited the disciples to bring some of the fish they had caught to be cooked on the fire he had started. What does Jesus invite you to bring to the table?
- 3) Was the command to feed the sheep just given to Peter or is it for you and I? If it is for you and I, what does it mean today for you?
- 4) How can you and I invite people to breakfast, lunch, dinner, or communion with Jesus? Are we prepared to share community with others.

John 21:5,6,9,10,15-17

Jesus called out, "Haven't you caught anything, friends?" And when they answered, "No", he said, "Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something." So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of fish.

As soon as they came ashore they saw that there was some bread there and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

When they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon Son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" He answered, Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied, Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Look after my sheep." Then he said to him a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you. Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Caring Time

Tonight we share together in communion, a symbol of the community we have been building here and an acknowledgement of the One who is the Source of our unity.

We share together our symbols.

Eucharistic Prayer

ONE: Holy One, you speak to us in silence, yet all languages interpret you. Because you call us to be in community, we are able to become gifts to one another. We invoke now your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these gifts, that in sharing them, we may discern your presence which becomes our life.

ONE: We remember and give you thanks for those called out with a vision of possibility and promise: for Abraham and Sarah, for Isaac and Rebecca, for Jacob with Leah and Rachel, for Moses and Miriam.

ONE: We thank you for your people who followed Moses through the birthing waters of the Red Sea into the wilderness of tempering search, until they became a people ready to enter the promised land.

ONE: We thank you for the openness of Mary who dared to accept the call to be the bearer and nurturer of your Anointed One, Jesus.

ONE: We thank you for those disciples who despite their doubts and confusion and betrayals followed Jesus. Empowered by your Spirit they shared Good News and established communities of love that have touched all of time since.

ALL: But most of all, O God, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for his tender compassion, his faithfulness in history and in our lives. Because of his witness and the witness of countless others who followed him, we have been drawn closer to full communion with you!

We remember how Jesus took the bread and gave thanks to you for it saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Eat and remember me." After the meal, Jesus turned to the cup. Lifting it up, he said, "This is my blood, which is poured out freely for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and remember me."

Bless all of the gifts that we bring today, both those on this table and the gifts of our lives. May the bread that we break and the cup that we share, feed and nurture our journey of faith. May we always be responsive to sharing your openness with others. May our community be established in your love, protected by your love, and nurtured to maturity through your love. Amen.

We will share communion together.

We will close our time together with prayer.

